

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-13 remain pending in this application. Claims 14-15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new claims have been added.

Priority

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the claim for priority. The acknowledgment of receipt box for the priority document was inadvertently checked on the Office Action. A certified copy of the priority document (JP 2001-102615, filed January 22, 2001) is being submitted herewith. An indication that this document has been safely received would be appreciated.

35 U.S.C. §101

Claims 14 and 15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer to render the rejection under this section moot.

35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103

Claims 1-4, 6, 7 and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Tanahashi et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,533,186). Claims 5 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hirata (U.S. Patent No. 5,781,899). Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated

by Abdel-Mottaleb et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,226,636). Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanahashi et al, as applied to claims 1-4, 6, 7 and 12-14 above, and further in view of Kusama et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,633,685). Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanahashi et al, as applied to claims 1-4, 6, 7 and 12-14 above, and further in view of Nikawa et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,834,130). Claim 11 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirata, as applied to claim 10 above, in view of Tanahashi et al. These rejections are traversed as follows.

The present invention is directed to an image retrieving method in which a user is prompted to select one attribute information item or a plurality of attribute information items from attribute information items prepared in advance and to assign the selected attribute information to a designated area of an image which is divided into a plurality of areas. Images are retrieved which have area-attribute information produced using the attribute information selected in combination with the information specifying the designated area from an image database and the retrieved images are then provided according to the image retrieving method.

Therefore, according to the present invention, attribute information (such as a line, a shape, or a texture) are prepared in advance. An image is divided into a plurality of areas and an image feature is extracted from each area and provided in a key-database as area-attribute information. A user is prompted to select one of the plurality of attribute information and assign the selected attribute information to a

designated area of an image divided into a plurality of areas. Images are retrieved which have area-attribute information in combination with information specifying the area of these divided image from the key-database. The retrieved images are then provided according to the image retrieving method.

Therefore, a feature of the present invention is to assign selected attribute information to a designated area of an image that is divided into a plurality of areas and retrieve images which have area-attribute information in combination with information specifying an area of the divided image. None of the cited references disclose or suggest these features of the presently claimed invention.

In other words, it is submitted that neither Tanahashi et al, Hirata, nor Abdel-Mottaleb et al disclose or suggest the area-attribute information of the presently claimed invention. For example, Tanashashi et al merely disclose an image filing method in which a plurality of images are registered and retrieved by adding a retrieval condition so as to be simple and require less time and labor (see Abstract). A plurality of symbols for featuring objects in the images are set in advance and the images are registered corresponding to the selected symbols (see Abstract). Tanashashi et al do not disclose the area-attribute information presently claimed.

Hirata discloses an image index production method and system in which the similarity between zones consisting of one or more pixels is measured. According to Hirata, an original image is divided into a gridded form and an individual representative zone number is given to each grid and zone attribute information

corresponding to the representative zone numbers are determined. Therefore, the original image is divided into gridded form and each grid and image index array are corresponded to the representative zone number (see column 7, lines 21-29). With respect to the portion cited by the Examiner at column 3, lines 14-29, Hirata merely discloses that a zone divider means is provided for dividing a zone according to visual characteristics of an original image, a block divider means is provided for dividing the original image into a gridded form, and an image index production means is provided for giving a corresponding zone number to each grid to arrange the zone numbers, and producing an index image having attribute information, which contains color information per divided zone, corresponding to each grid. However, Hirata does not disclose the area-attribute information of the presently claimed invention.

Abdel-Mottaleb et al disclose a system for retrieving images using a database in which an image is divided into regions and a histogram is calculated for the region and binary representation of the histogram is generated. This corresponding data is stored to the image in a binary tree based on the binary representation. However, Abdel-Mottaleb et al fail to disclose the area-attribute information of the presently claimed invention.

The deficiencies in the primary references are not overcome by resort to Kusama et al and Nikawa et al. The Examiner merely relies upon Nikawa et al for disclosing displaying images sequentially and relies upon Kusama et al for disclosing

an image being synthesized. However, neither of these references disclose the area-attribute information presently claimed.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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